



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

74245
742450

December 13, 1974

SEB
E1418

To: The Deputy Secretary

From: IO - William B. Buffum *WB*
PA - Carol C. Laise *CC*

Federal Responsibility
for International Women's Year

Problem

To assign responsibility within the Executive Branch for coordinating and directing the 1975 national observance of International Women's Year in the United States.

Background

In 1972 the UN General Assembly voted a resolution proclaiming 1975 as International Women's Year (IWY), (Tab C). It called on member states to emphasize the following themes:

- to promote equality between men and women,
- to ensure the full integration of women into the "total development effort" by emphasizing women's responsibilities and roles in economic, social and cultural development,
- to recognize the importance of women's contributions to the development of friendly relations and cooperation among states and to the strengthening of world peace.

An international conference under UN auspices is scheduled to meet in Mexico City next June. IO has thus far taken the lead to assume its usual responsibility for coordinating and directing US participation in that conference.

Although President Nixon issued a proclamation (Tab D) in January of this year which designated 1975 as International Women's Year in the US, there is as yet no Agency or individual fully in charge of what is rapidly becoming a major national event. Women's organizations are responding to what they see as the challenge and opportunity of International Women's Year with great interest -- even intensity -- across the country. Indeed, with final adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment to our Constitution almost at hand, IWY has become the new rallying point for American women.

The interest being shown in IWY has in great measure been stimulated by the efforts of the US Center for International Women's Year which was established largely at Departmental initiative with CU funding in 1973. It is directed by a former Foreign Service Officer, Miss Ruth Bacon and has done good work in motivating and planning the observance of International Women's Year across the country.

It is increasingly clear, as a recent letter (Tab B) to the Secretary from Senators Percy and Symington emphasizes, that the women's movement wishes the Federal Government to establish some tangible evidence of the importance we attach to International Women's Year. The Percy-Symington letter accurately reflects the strength of the feeling we have detected among women's organizations in favor of the creation of a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for International Women's Year. Women's organizations are fully aware that a similar position existed to coordinate national observance of World Population Year in 1974, and that a National Commission was established by the President as well. Ed Martin's recent visibility as Special Assistant for the World Food Conference has reinforced the intensity of the belief among women that the Federal Government -- and particularly the Department of State -- need to accord equal status to IWY.

Organizing for International Women's Year

While identifying the Department directly with IWY will inevitably subject us to cross-currents within the women's movement, Ed Martin and Phil Claxton seem to

have weathered their respective storms and to have provided useful leadership within the Federal bureaucracy and the country as a whole. For this reason, and also because we see an important opportunity to enlist the interests and energies of women in the process of rebuilding a national consensus on foreign policy, we are presenting you with a series of positive organizational options below.

While no domestic Cabinet agency has evidenced any interest in assuming responsibility for national observance of IWY, \$330,000 of an estimated total budget of \$500,000, and four positions (two each from State and USIA), have been committed should an organizational structure for the observance of the Year be created. The dollar contributions come from State, HEW, Justice, Interior, Commerce and Transportation. The Departments of Treasury and Labor have indicated that no funds are available for this purpose. Defense, HUD, and Agriculture have not responded to this Department's request for contributions. We believe, however, that additional positions and financial contributions can be elicited to support the organizational options presented below.

OPTIONS:

A. National Commission operating out of the White House

1. Pro..

- a. Creation of a National Commission by the President will identify the Administration with an activity of great domestic interest.
- b. A National Commission would be well received by women's groups which will appreciate White House involvement and may resent anything less as reflecting insufficient Administration interest.
- c. Creating a Commission operating from the White House will help to ensure effective participation and coordination of the domestic observance of IWY by the Federal and State Governments and private organizations.

2. Con

Some women's groups may resent what appears to them to be a politicizing of IWY by direct connection with the White House.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the attached memorandum (Tab A) to the President recommending that he establish a National Commission for the observance of International Women's Year (the memorandum as drafted reflects our preferred position with respect to the Department's own organizational support for IWY; if you prefer another option among those listed below, we can of course redraft the memorandum).

Approve as drafted 751 12/18/76

Disapprove as drafted _____

Redraft _____

Disapprove _____

INTRA-DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS

Whether or not you choose to recommend to the President that he establish a National Commission, we believe it important to provide some visible focus within the Department which can respond to the increasingly intense interest women are evidencing in IWY and the American preparations for the International Conference at Mexico City in June.

Creating some temporary organizational unit within the Department will enable us to (1) backstop the National Commission, or serve as partial substitute for it in coordinating the domestic observance of IWY with US participation in the International Conference and (2) enable us to enlist women's interest in responding to the Secretary's own goal of rebuilding a national consensus. The options are:

A. Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for IWY

Pro

- a. This high visibility option would identify the Department most effectively with an occasion of great interest to women's groups.
- b. A Special Assistant would command the greatest authority to mobilize Departmental resources.
- c. Establishment of such a position would parallel arrangements made for World Population Year and the World Food Conference; women's groups attach considerable importance to according equivalent treatment to IWY...

Con

- a. Such a position could subject the Secretary and the Department to cross-current within the women's movement with unpredictable, but potentially negative, consequences.
- b. The Secretary is determined to eliminate from his office this kind of ad hoc function, and is already taking steps to do so.

B. Create a "seventh floor Task Force" headed by a Senior Coordinator, with staff drawn from representatives of pertinent bureaus and offices within the Department; additional representatives could be named by other interested agencies. While the Task Force would be located on the seventh floor, and while it might be desirable to obtain assistance and guidance from you, the Task Force would not be directly identified with the office of any of the Principals.

Pro

- a. This option would preserve the organizational benefits of the first option but without directly exposing the Secretary to anticipated cross-currents within the women's movement.

- b. This is probably the minimum organizational effort which the Department could make and still appear responsive to women's interest in IWY.

Con

- a. The option is bureaucratically untidy.
- b. Creation of any seventh floor organizational structure will expose the Department to cross-currents within the women's movement.

C. Establishing a Coordinator and Staff in IO or PA

Pro

- a. To the extent that any organization within the Department serves as a lightning rod for political cross-currents within the women's movement, this low-visibility option would reduce the impact on the Secretary and his immediate subordinates.
- b. IO has considerable experience in coordinating US participation in international events and would carry out its assigned responsibilities re the international conference in any event; PA has some experience in working with domestic groups in the context of the domestic observation of IWY.

Con

- a. Neither IO nor PA would have as much authority to coordinate efforts with other Federal agencies, much less State Governments and private organizations.

- D. To recommend to the President that he establish a National Commission with staff operating from the White House, but to create no visible organizational entity within the Department, leaving it to IO to provide its usual support for international conferences.

Pro

This would reduce to a minimum the Department's exposure to political cross-currents.

Con

- a. Women's groups would not only interpret this as politicizing IWY but would also regard inaction by the Department as a rebuff, the consequences of which would almost certainly be negative.
- b. The Department would be sidelined on this opportunity to surface and channel women's interest in IWY in ways which would support our efforts to rebuild a national consensus.

RECOMMENDATION:

On balance, we recommend that you authorize creation of a Task Force headed by a senior Coordinator operating from the seventh floor but with no direct link to S or D (recognizing, however, that the coordinator may look to you for guidance and assistance as required). We believe this recommendation will preserve most of the benefits which the Department might derive from active identification with IWY and at the same time reduce to a tolerable minimum the potential political costs flowing from cross-currents within the women's movement.

Approve

RSI 12/18/74

Disapprove

Prefer Option A

Prefer Option B

RSI

Prefer Option C

Prefer Option D

Attachments:

- Tab A - Memorandum to the President with Draft Executive Order
- Tab B - Letter from Senators Percy and Symington with interim reply
- Tab C - UN General Assembly resolution on IWY
- Tab D - Presidential Proclamation

Drafted: PA:CWDray/IO:SMenter
12/13/74:ext. 29326

Clearances: A/BF - Mr. Murray (draft)
E - Mr. Brown (Substance)